

Business Communication Instructor Guide

Module 13: Communication Challenges in Multicultural Environments

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Learning Outcomes

[Detailed Course Learning Outcome Spreadsheet is linked here.](#)

Topic	Student Learning Goals
Diversity in the Workplace	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand the benefits and challenges of having a diverse workforce
Culture and Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand the difference between race and ethnicity Understand how cultural differences related to race can affect communication Understand how cultural differences among people from different countries can affect communication Understand how cultural differences related to religion can affect communication Understand how to adjust your communication for an audience that includes people with different cultures
Demographic Differences and Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand how to use gender-neutral language in business communications Understand how people of different genders might communicate differently Understand how various disabilities may affect communication Understand how to improve communication between people of different ages
Overcoming Bias in Workplace Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand the difference between stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination Understand how biases can affect communication in the workplace

Summary of Module

Readiness Check focuses on assessing and improving emotional intelligence.

Practice provides content that closes the module with a look at Harvard's Project Implicit and various Implicit Association Tests and flashcards as a study aid.

Student's Choice: a selection of videos about accessibility and ableism

Among the **real world examples** in this module are:

- The gender blindness of Apple's Health App in omitting a tool for monitoring menstrual cycles in its initial form
- The different meanings of common hand gestures in other countries
- Criticism aimed at Nike for incorporating a stylized logo on the sole of sneakers that resembled the word "Allah" in Arabic script
- Wider adoption of the term "pregnant people" in place of "pregnant women" to be more inclusive
- Gen Z values of authenticity and expressiveness clashing with corporate expectations
- Blind auditions to combat gender bias in hiring
- Starbucks closing stores for an afternoon of racial bias training

Module Resources

Cheat Sheet



[Module 13 Cheat Sheet in English](#)



[Module 13 Cheat Sheet in Spanish](#)

Instructional Support



[Module 13 Slide Deck](#)



[Video List](#)



[Evidence-Based Teaching Practices](#)

Activity One: Intercultural Business Meeting

Evidence-Based Teaching Practices



Contextualization

Students work together to research another culture in the same way as professionals who are preparing for an important intercultural meeting.



Self-Reflection

Students will need to reflect on their own cultural norms and develop inclusive, culturally sensitive communication strategies.

Background

In this activity, students will be working within a scenario where the company that they work for has merged with one from another company. The task is to research the communication norms and professional behaviors of the foreign country, and then develop a strategy to facilitate effective communication and collaboration during a workshop to address team integration.

Learning Outcome Alignment

- Explain what diversity is and the advantages and challenges of employee diversity within organizations
- Discuss how cultural differences among individuals from different countries may influence communication

Instructions

Time Estimate: 30-45 minutes

1. Conversation starter

What is one cultural practice or tradition from your background that is important to you?

2. Review

You may wish to review general business etiquette practices and how they can vary across different cultures and key competencies needed for effective intercultural communication, such as empathy, open-mindedness, and adaptability.

3. Split class into groups of 3-4 students

Students will need to be able to record their research findings either on paper or electronically.

4. Research and report findings

Each group selects a country that their company has merged with. Ensure that each group chooses a different country to cover a diverse range of cultures. Each group should:

- a. Investigate the selected country's cultural norms, focusing on communication styles, professional behaviors, and business etiquette.
- b. Pay particular attention to aspects such as greeting protocols, meeting conduct, decision-making processes, and hierarchical structures.
- c. Develop a comprehensive strategy for conducting the team integration workshop.
 - i. Outline specific communication techniques and professional behaviors that will foster effective collaboration.
 - ii. Create a detailed agenda for the workshop, including ice-breakers, discussion topics, and team-building activities tailored to the cultural context.
- d. Each group presents their research and strategy to the class.

Discussion Prompts

- **What were some of the most surprising cultural differences you discovered?**
- **How did these cultural differences influence your strategy for the team integration workshop?**

Debrief

How can understanding these cultural differences benefit your overall professional communication skills?

Online Variation

You will individually research the communication norms and professional behaviors of a selected country and develop a strategy for conducting a team integration workshop following a company merger with a foreign firm.

1. Choose a foreign country that you are not familiar with.
2. Investigate the selected country's cultural norms, focusing on communication styles, professional behaviors, and business etiquette.
 - a. Greeting Protocols: How are greetings typically conducted in a business setting?
 - b. Meeting Conduct: What is the expected behavior during meetings? Are there specific norms for punctuality, agenda setting, and participation?
 - c. Decision-Making Processes: How are decisions typically made? Is the culture more hierarchical or collaborative?
 - d. Hierarchical Structures: What is the approach to hierarchy and authority in the workplace?
3. Based on your research, develop a comprehensive strategy for conducting the team integration workshop. Outline specific communication techniques and professional behaviors that will foster effective collaboration. Consider the following:
 - a. Workshop Agenda: Create a detailed agenda for the workshop, including ice-breakers, discussion topics, and team-building activities tailored to the cultural context.
 - b. Communication Techniques: Specify how you will adapt your communication style (e.g., direct vs. indirect communication, use of formal titles).
 - c. Professional Behaviors: Detail the professional behaviors expected in the selected culture (e.g., dress code, body language).

4. Prepare a presentation to share your findings and strategy. Include the following sections:
 - a. Introduction: Briefly introduce the country and the context of the merger.
 - b. Cultural Research: Present your research on the country's communication norms and professional behaviors.
 - c. Strategy: Explain your strategy for the team integration workshop, highlighting how you will address cultural differences.
 - d. Visual Aids: Use slides, charts, and other visual aids to enhance understanding.
 5. Record your presentation using a video recording tool (e.g., Zoom, Loom) and upload to your LMS.
 6. Write a short reflective essay (300-500 words) on what you learned from the activity and how you can apply these insights to your future professional interactions. Address the following questions:
 - a. What were the most surprising cultural differences you discovered?
 - b. How did these cultural differences influence your strategy for the team integration workshop?
 - c. How can understanding these cultural differences benefit your overall professional communication skills?
 7. Upload your essay to the LMS.
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Activity Two: Generational Interview Project

Evidence-Based Teaching Practices



Engagement

In this activity, students will actively practice communication skills by conducting research through personal interviews.



High Expectations

An interview assignment can be daunting but this project will allow students to practice communication skills and learn more about generational differences.

Background

In this activity, students will interview individuals from different generations to understand their communication preferences and styles. This exercise will help you identify the communication gaps and strategies to bridge them, fostering better intergenerational understanding in the workplace.

Homework

Before coming to class, assign students the task of interviewing one person from each generational cohort

Instructions: Choose at least one person from each of the following generational cohorts: Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials, and Generation Z. These can be family members, friends, colleagues, or acquaintances. If you are unsure of someone's age, you can frame your approach by asking about their experiences and milestones (e.g., "What major events do you remember from your teenage years?") to help determine their generational cohort without directly asking their age.

Ask each person:

1. How do you prefer to receive information (e.g., email, text, in-person)?
2. What communication challenges have you experienced with other generations?

3. How do you adapt your communication style when interacting with different generations?

Take detailed notes and be prepared to discuss your findings in class.

Learning Outcome Alignment

- If you'd like to tie this to a specific Topic or LO you can list it here, or licensing info.

Instructions

Time Estimate: 30-45 minutes

1. Conversation starter

Can you think of a time when you had difficulty communicating with someone from a different generation? What was the challenge and how did you handle it?

2. Review

You may wish to review the generational cohorts (Baby Boomers, Gen X, Millennials, Gen Z) and common characteristics and communication styles of each generation.

3. Discuss findings as a class

- a. Key differences and similarities in communication preferences across generations.

Optional AI Component: Students could compare interview findings with AI generated "profiles" of generational communication styles, critically analyzing where real experiences align with or contradict algorithmic generalizations.

- b. Common challenges faced when communicating with different generations.
- c. Effective strategies to improve intergenerational communication.

Discussion Prompts

- **What surprised you the most about the communication preferences of different generations?**

- **How do the communication challenges you identified impact workplace dynamics?**
- **What strategies do you think are most effective in bridging generational communication gaps?**

Debrief

You may wish to spend some time discussing the challenges of finding and speaking to interview subjects.

Online Variation

Choose at least one person from each of the following generational cohorts: Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials, and Generation Z. These can be family members, friends, colleagues, or acquaintances. If you are unsure of someone's age, you can frame your approach by asking about their experiences and milestones (e.g., "What major events do you remember from your teenage years?") to help determine their generational cohort without directly asking their age.

Ask each person:

1. How do you prefer to receive information (e.g., email, text, in-person)?
2. What communication challenges have you experienced with other generations?
3. How do you adapt your communication style when interacting with different generations?

In a post to the discussion forum, present your results:

- Key differences and similarities in communication preferences across generations.
- What surprised you the most about the communication preferences of different generations?
- How do the communication challenges you identified impact workplace dynamics?
- What strategies do you think are most effective in bridging generational communication gaps?

Read and provide constructive feedback on at least two other students' posts, focusing on their proposed strategies and how they could be implemented in different contexts.

Activity Three: Responding to Microaggressions

Evidence-Based Teaching Practices



Success Skills

Students practice using the RAVEN framework in responding to microaggressions to enhance their communication skills.



Reflecting Student Experiences

Educators choose course materials and examples that reflect a range of backgrounds, experiences, and ways of thinking. When students see familiar perspectives or people like them in the content, they feel more connected and confident in the learning environment. Faculty also help students appreciate what they can learn from others, using stories, visuals, case studies, or example problems that reflect different life experiences and viewpoints. In this activity, students are encouraged to share experiences they have had with microaggressions or other uncomfortable situations and discuss constructive ways to respond to them.

Background

This activity focuses on identifying and responding to microaggressions in the workplace using the RAVEN framework developed by Dr. Frank Harris III and Dr. J. Luke Wood. Microaggressions are subtle, often unintentional, offensive comments or actions that can harm individuals, especially those from marginalized groups. Understanding how to address these situations fosters a more inclusive and respectful work environment.

- Article, "[How to Respond to Racial Microaggressions When They Occur](#)"
- Slides, "[Interrupting Biases](#)"
- Slide, "[RAVEN Approach](#)"
- Video, [Examples of Workplace Microaggressions](#)
- Video, [Example of Unconscious Racial Bias in the Workplace](#)
- Video, [Social Intelligence as a Work Skill](#)

Learning Outcome Alignment

- Discuss the impact bias might have on communication in the workplace

Instructions

Time Estimate: 30-45 minutes

1. Conversation starter

What's one way you've seen or experienced respect or disrespect in a workplace or school setting?

2. Review

- a. Definition and examples of microaggressions.
- b. The impact of microaggressions on individuals and organizational culture.
- c. The RAVEN method:
 - i. Redirect the conversation or interaction
 - ii. Ask probing questions
 - iii. Values clarification
 - iv. Emphasize your own thoughts and feelings
 - v. Next steps

3. Split class into groups of 2-3 students

Students will role play responding to microaggressions using the RAVEN framework.

You may wish to use the videos provided above as a starting point for students to role play responses. Alternatively, you can ask students to share situations they have experienced or observed in the past and role play responses to those.

In each role play, assign roles: the person who committed the microaggression, the person who experienced it, and any bystanders.

4. Debrief after each role play

Discussion Prompts

- How did the use of the RAVEN method affect the interaction?
- What was challenging about using this method?
- How might you use these strategies in real-life situations?

Debrief

- What are the potential challenges in using the RAVEN method, and how can they be overcome?
- How can bystanders support individuals who are experiencing microaggressions?

Large Class Variation

Implement a "think-pair-share" approach where students first individually write their RAVEN response to a scenario, discuss with one neighbor, then volunteers share with the larger group.

Online Variation

In this exercise, we will focus on identifying and responding to microaggressions in the workplace using the RAVEN method. Microaggressions are subtle, often unintentional, offensive comments or actions that can have a significant negative impact on individuals, particularly those from marginalized groups. By learning and practicing the RAVEN method, we aim to foster a more inclusive and respectful work environment. This method provides a structured approach to addressing microaggressions, helping to redirect conversations and clarify values to promote understanding and respect.

1. Read the article, "[How to Respond to Racial Microaggressions When They Occur](#)"
2. Watch the video, [Examples of Workplace Microaggressions](#), and select one scene in the video to respond to.

3. Write a brief reflection (150-200 words) on the microaggression you observed in the video and its impact on the people involved.
 4. Explain how you would implement the RAVEN framework in that situation if you were a bystander.
 5. Post to the discussion forum on your LMS.
 6. Read and provide constructive feedback on at least two other students' posts, focusing on their use of the RAVEN framework.
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Assignments

[Assignment Package](#)

This document contains a collection of written assignments and recommendations about how to incorporate them into your course.

[AI Assisted Assignment Package](#)

In this version of the course assignment package, all major assignments include a component where students use an artificial intelligence tool as part of their work process.

[Module Discussion: Intergenerational Communication Gaps](#)

This discussion explores generational differences in communication.

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